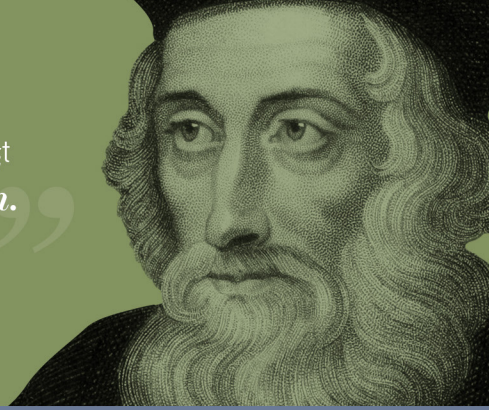


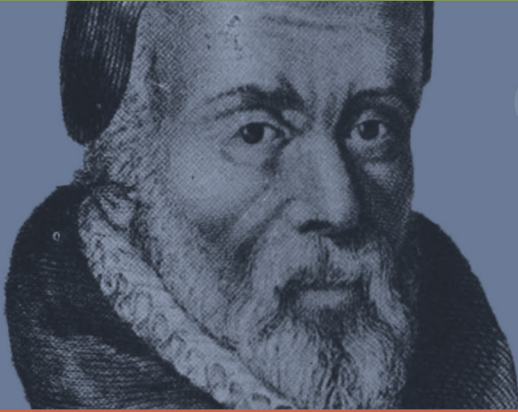
“ be wit of goddis law shulde be tauzt  
in þat tunge *þat is more knowun.*”

John Wyclif



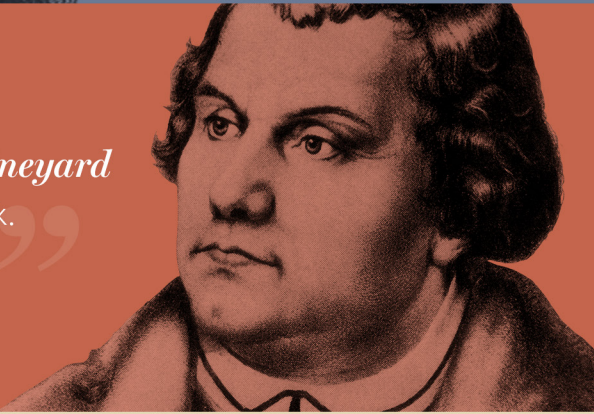
“ to have all the scripture  
*unlocked and opened*  
before thee.”

William Tyndale



“ The Scriptures *are our vineyard*  
in which we should all work.”

Martin Luther



# Unlocking the Bible

The Bible & the Reformation

Norman C. Conrad, Exhibition Curator

# Unlocking the Bible

## The Bible & the Reformation

The Bible was at the center of the Protestant Reformation and the debates and discussions on Christian theology and practice. The reformers engaged with the Bible in new ways, studying the original Greek and Hebrew texts, and teaching and preaching the Bible to the people. They taught that the Bible was the word of God, the highest spiritual authority. They believed the Bible was clear and understandable, full of truth and wisdom. They worked tirelessly to translate the Bible into the languages of the common people. The German reformer Martin Luther wrote that “*we must ask the mother in the home, the children in the street, the common person in the market about this. We must be guided by their tongue, the manner of their speech, and do our translating accordingly.*”<sup>i</sup> The English Bible translator William Tyndale desired “***to have all the scripture unlocked and opened before thee; so that if thou wilt go in, and read, thou canst not but understand.***”<sup>ii</sup> The Bibles of the Reformation were meant to be opened, read, and studied so that all could engage with the Bible.

# From Vulgate to Vernacular

During the medieval era (AD 500-1500), the Western church and the pope possessed immense spiritual and political authority. The Bible of the West was the Vulgate, a translation adapted from Jerome's fourth-century Latin revision. Access to the Bible was limited primarily to scholars, clergy, and the wealthy. Most people could not read Latin, and books were rare and expensive, produced by hand. The church taught that popes, councils, the Bible, and tradition were all considered sources of spiritual authority. The church also asserted it had the sole authority to interpret the Bible, and prohibited vernacular (common language) translations.

John Wycliffe, sometimes called the "morning star of the Reformation," struck a spark that ignited the flame of an impending revolution. In the 1380s, Wycliffe's followers produced the first complete translation of the Bible in English. Then another momentous development impacted Europe. In the 1450s, Johannes Gutenberg developed a metal movable-type printing press, allowing for faster and cheaper book production. His first major printed work was the Latin Vulgate.

In 1517, Martin Luther, a German monk, challenged the church's authority. He wrote the Ninety-Five Theses, arguing that the pope did not have the authority to issue indulgences for the forgiveness of sins for the living or for souls in purgatory. This document, and Luther's reputation and writings, spread throughout Europe, initiating the Protestant Reformation.

Luther later taught that the Bible, not the church, was the highest spiritual authority. Luther also wanted a vernacular Bible that was accessible to common people. From 1521 to 1522, he translated the New Testament into German from Greek, using Desiderius Erasmus's recent edition of the Greek New Testament. Luther's work influenced other Reformation Bible translations. For example, the first complete Bible printed in Spanish was the Reina Bible, another important vernacular translation. The 1602 revision of this Bible by Cipriano de Valera became the definitive biblical text in Spanish.

## **Pope Pius IX, Papal Bull**

Paper

Rome (Italy)

1848

GC.PPR.009921

*During the medieval era, two papal bulls allowed indulgences to be issued for the remission of sins, and that the purchase of an indulgence could reduce an already-deceased person's time in purgatory. Displayed is a more recent example of a papal bull.*

## **Biblia Sacra, in Latin**

Vellum

Italy

ca. 1250–1275

NCF.MS.000351

*The so-called Paris Pocket Bible of the mid-1200s was the first Bible to be bound in its modern recognizable form. Its compact size, standardized format, and separation into chapters was popular among students and scholars. This Italian Bible manuscript follows the Paris Pocket Bible format.*

## **Wycliffite New Testament, in Middle English**

Illuminated manuscript on vellum

England, probably London

ca. 1450s

MOTB.MS.000340

*The Wycliffite Bible, produced in the 1380s, was the first complete Bible in English. In 1408, in response to the spread of the English Bible and Wycliffe's writings, the Constitution of Oxford ruled that any translation of the Bible into English or any other language was punishable by excommunication.*

## **Johannes Gutenberg Sculpture**

Bronze

ca. 19th century

GC.STA.000173

*In the late 1390s, Johannes Gutenberg was born into an upper class family in Mainz (Germany). He learned various crafts, including blacksmithing, jewel cutting, and goldsmithing.*

autē opera<sup>9</sup> est deū et adorant: fecit  
sculptile- et curuat<sup>9</sup> est ante illud. Me-  
dium eius combussit igni: de medio  
eius carnes coxit. Comedit pulmentū  
et saturatus ē: et calefactus est: dixit.  
Vah calefact<sup>9</sup> sum: vidi focū. Reliquū  
autē eius- deū fecit: sculptile sibi. Cur-  
uatur ante illud: et adorat illud: et ob-  
secrat dicens. Libera me: quia deus me-  
us es tu. Steterūt neq; intellexerunt.  
Obliti enim sunt ne videāt oculi eorū:  
et ne intelligant corde suo. Non reco-  
gitant in mente sua: neq; cognoscunt  
neq; sentiūt ut dicant. Medietatē ei<sup>9</sup>  
combussit igni: et coxi sup carbones e-  
ius panes. Coxi carnes et comedi: et

Qui dico pronuntio deuolare: et nu-  
mina tua arfaciam. Qui dico oro  
pastor me<sup>9</sup> es: et omnē voluntatē meā  
complebis. Qui dico iherusalem edi-  
ficaberis: et tēplo sūdaberis. **XLV**

**N**ec dicit dñs rēsto meo oro cui<sup>9</sup>  
apphendi deitatem ut subiciam  
ante faciem eius genes: et porta re-  
gum rectā. Et aperiat corā eo ianuas:  
et porte nō claudentur. Ego autē te i-  
bo: et gloriosos terre humiliabo. Por-  
tas eras cōteram: et vides fetros con-  
fingā. Et dabo tibi thesauros abson-  
ditos et archan  
ego dñs - q̄ vobis nōme tuū dñs ier-  
hel: propter serūū meū iacob: et iherab-

Gutenberg Bible Leaf

## Gutenberg Bible Leaf, in Latin

Isaiah 43-45

Printed by Johannes Gutenberg

Cotton rag paper

Mainz (Germany)

ca. 1455

MOTB.INC.000118

*The Gutenberg Bible, the Latin Vulgate, was his first major printing project. Because of the printing press, the number of books in Europe increased from about 30,000 in 1450 to over eight million by 1500.*

## Martin Luther Sculpture

Bronze and polymer

United States of America

2010

GC.STA.000176

*Martin Luther's writings and teachings spread throughout Europe sparking the Reformation.*

**Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, *Amorum libri II, De amore conjugali III...***

Inscribed and signed by Martin Luther, 1533

Paper

Venice (Italy)

1518

GC.PBK.000186

*Martin Luther inscribed and signed a portion of Psalm 95 in German in this book of Latin poetry to an unknown friend in 1533.*

***Novum Testamentum Omne, Greek New Testament***

Edited by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam

Paper

Basel (Switzerland)

1519

MOTB.BIB.003612

*Humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus published the first edition of Novum Instrumentum Omne in 1516, the first printed Greek New Testament parallel with a corrected text of the Latin Vulgate. The second edition, with title change, is shown here.*

***Das Allte testament deutsch, in German***

Translated by Martin Luther

Paper

Wittenberg (Germany)

1524

GC.BIB.003838

*Luther's German New Testament was first published in 1522, followed by the publication of the Pentateuch in 1523. The 1524 edition is shown here. Luther's complete German Bible was published in 1534, and over 500,000 copies were in circulation by his death in 1546.*

***El Testamento Nuevo, in Spanish***

Translated by Juan Pérez de Pineda

Paper

Geneva (Switzerland)

1556

Loan courtesy of The Eric Volz Collection

*Juan Pérez de Pineda was the second to translate the New Testament into Spanish from the Greek text. Pineda was a Spanish convert to Protestantism who sought refuge in John Calvin's Geneva.*

### ***La Biblia (Reina Bible), in Spanish***

Translated by Casiodoro de Reina

Cotton rag paper

Basel (Switzerland)

1569

NCF.BIB.001153

*The translator Casiodoro de Reina was a Spanish monk who converted to Protestantism. Known as the “Bible of the Bear” because of the image on the title page, this volume is the first complete Bible printed in Spanish.*

### ***La Biblia (Reina-Valera Bible), in Spanish***

Translated by Cipriano de Valera

Paper

Amsterdam (Netherlands)

1602

GC.BIB.003873

*This translation is a revision of the Reina Bible done by Cipriano de Valera, a Catholic monk who supported the teachings of the Protestant Reformation. This Bible was owned by the Spanish queen Maria Cristina who authorized the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish-American War in 1898.*





# The Protestant Reformation Expands

The Reformation spread into England during the reign of King Henry VIII. In 1526, William Tyndale, inspired by Luther, illegally printed his English New Testament. Henry ordered every copy collected and burned. William Tyndale was tried for heresy in 1536, and was strangled and burned at the stake.

After the death of the Protestant king Edward VI in 1553, Mary Tudor, a devout Catholic, ascended the throne of England. She sought to return England to Catholicism. Several English Protestant leaders and scholars fled to the European continent during her reign, and produced many significant works. While in exile, John Foxe expanded his work *Actes and Monuments* by including the stories of the martyrs of the Protestant Reformation. About 300 of the exiles settled in Geneva, the home of John Calvin. Calvin was a prominent French Protestant reformer and theologian. He wrote the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536, intending the work to be a summary of Christian theology and to help others understand the Bible.

The English exiles also produced the 1560 Geneva Bible, translated into English from the Hebrew and Greek texts. In the preface, the translators encouraged the reader to “*earnestly studie it and in your life practise it.*”<sup>iii</sup> It was the first English Bible with numbered chapters and verses, and illustrations, charts, and marginal notes with commentary. These notes were controversial, as they contained principles of Calvin’s theology, and adopted a somewhat anticlerical and antimonarchical position. When they returned to England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, these exiles became the core of the Puritan movement. The King James Version of the Bible, completed in 1611, was commissioned by the king, in part, as a response to the success of the Geneva Bible.





### ***The new Testament, in English***

Translated by William Tyndale

Paper

London (England)

1553

MOTB.BIB.000246

*Tyndale's English New Testament was the first printed English translation from the Greek text. John Foxe, in his work Actes and Monuments, wrote that Tyndale declared that he wished that "a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than he did."*<sup>iv</sup>

### ***John Calvin, The Institution of Christian Religion, in English***

Translated by Thomas Norton

Paper

London (England)

1562

GC.PBK.000137

*This is the second English edition of Calvin's Institutes, called Institution in this printing. It was translated by Thomas Norton, the son-in-law of English reformer Thomas Cranmer.*

## **Geneva Bible, in English**

Translated by William Whittingham, Anthony Gilby, and others

Paper

Geneva (Switzerland)

1560

NCF.BIB.001150

*This is a copy of the first edition of the Geneva Bible. One example of an antimonarchical marginal note is found next to 1 Kings 16:31, the first mention of Jezebel. The note claims that because of Queen Jezebel, King Ahab “fel to all wicked, and strange idolatry, and cruell persecution.” This reference, perhaps innocuous to a modern reader, was likely a strong comparison of Mary Tudor with the “wicked” Jezebel. The exiles saw Mary’s reign as a threat to “true Christianity,” and frequently referred to her as a cruel idolater.*

## **Rheims New Testament, in English**

Translated by Gregory Martin

Paper

Rheims (France)

1582

GC.BIB.003696

*The Rheims New Testament was translated primarily by Father Gregory Martin. It adheres closely to the Latin Vulgate, but shows careful comparison to the Greek. As something of a Catholic response to Protestant English translations, its title page declares it contains arguments and annotations and “other necessarie helps, for the better understanding of the text, and specially for the discoverie of the CORRUPTIONS of divers late translations, and for clearing the CONTROVERSIES in religion, of these daies.”<sup>v</sup> The Rheims New Testament influenced the 1611 King James Bible translators with its scholarship, translation theory, accuracy, vocabulary, and turns of phrase.*

## John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments (Foxe's Book of Martyrs)*

Paper

London (England)

1563

MOTB.PBK.000369

*This is a copy of the first edition of Actes and Monuments, one of the most influential English works ever printed. In 1570, Church of England officials ordered that a copy of Foxe's book be placed in every parish church. It remains widely-read today.*

## King James Bible

Printed by Robert Barker

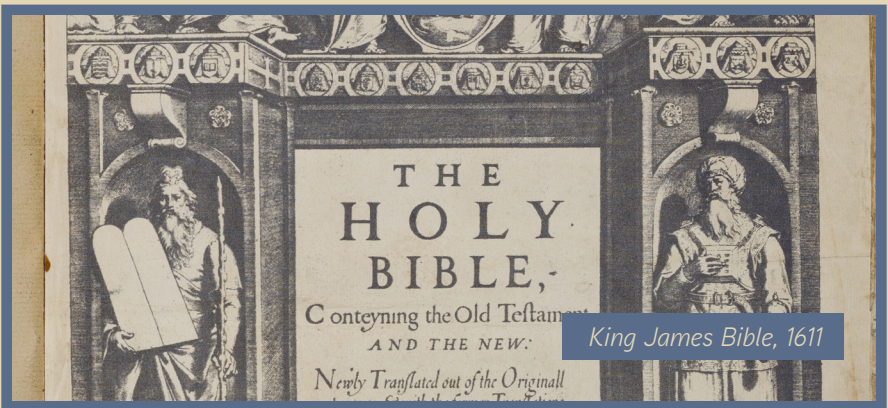
Cotton rag paper

London (England)

1611

GC.BIB.001311

*Over forty scholars worked on the King James Bible from 1604-1611. In the preface titled "The Translators to the Reader," the scholars explained that "translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place...." <sup>vi</sup>*



## Endnotes:

Front Cover – “...the knowledge of God’s law should be taught in that tongue that is more known” – John Wycliffe

<sup>i</sup> Martin Luther, *An Open Letter on Translating* (1530), translated by Dr. Gary Mann and released into the public domain. (<http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/luther-translate.txt>)

<sup>ii</sup> William Tyndale, *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture* (1530), in *Doctrinal Treaties and Introductions to Different Portions of The Holy Scripture, by William Tyndale Martyr, 1536*, ed. Henry Walter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848).

<sup>iii</sup> “To Our Beloved in the Lord,” preface to the Geneva Bible (Geneva, 1560).

<sup>iv</sup> John Foxe, Chapter XII, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1563).

<sup>v</sup> Rheims New Testament, title page (Rheims, 1582).

<sup>vi</sup> “The Translators to the Reader,” preface to the King James Bible (London, 1611).

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**“NCF” items on loan courtesy of the *National Christian Foundation***

#mBible #UnlockingTheBible   

### ***Unlocking the Bible: The Bible and the Reformation***

Norman C. Conrad, Exhibition Curator, Curator of Americana & Printed Bibles

Allison Brown, Writer & Editor

Stacey L. Douglas, Copy Editor

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## Museum of the Bible

In the fall of 2017, Museum of the Bible opens its eight floor, 430,000-square-foot museum in Washington, DC. Under construction, it is conveniently located two blocks south of the National Mall and three blocks southwest of the Capitol.

Museum of the Bible is a place where people can engage with the Bible—its history, narratives, and impact—in their own way through in-depth explorations and interactive media and technologies. The museum and its traveling exhibitions display ancient Near Eastern, Jewish, and Christian artifacts and documents from the museum's collection. These irreplaceable historical items help tell various stories involving the Bible—as a historical and cultural item as well as a sacred text. The museum seeks to create an atmosphere of wonder and exploration, of reflection and contemplation, inviting all people to look at the Bible anew.

As of 2016, Museum of the Bible traveling exhibits have been on display in several U.S. cities and in five other countries: The Vatican, Rome, Italy; Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem, Israel; Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Ulmer Museum, Ulm, Germany; and S.M.I. Catedral de La Habana, Havana, and Catedral de Nuestra Señora de la Asunción, Santiago, Cuba. More traveling exhibits are being planned and new locations sought to increase access to the museum's artifacts and to invite all people to engage with the Bible.

For more information, visit [museumoftheBible.org](http://museumoftheBible.org).



**museum of the Bible**

[museumoftheBible.org](https://museumoftheBible.org)